

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /086 W
----- 008731

R 261621Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4942

INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 13813

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR, BG, UR

SUBJ: SOVIET-BANGLADESH RELATIONS: SPECIAL ENVOY VISITS MOSCOW

1. SUMMARY. A "SPECIAL ENVOY" FROM THE PRESIDENT OF BANGLADESH, M. AHMED, MET WITH SOVIET OFFICIALS LAST WEEK TO DISCUSS MULTILATERAL AND BILATERAL QUESTION, INCLUDING SOVIET AID PROJECTS. WE SURMISE THAT HIS PRIMARY PURPOSE WAS TO REASSURE THE SOVIETS THAT THE EARLY RECOGNITION BY PAKISTAN AND CHINA DID NOT SIGNIFY AND SHIFT IN DACCA'S FOREIGN POLICY. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBOFF CALLED ON BANGLADESH CHARGE MAHBUBAL HUK ON SEPTEMBER 25 TO DISCUSS SOVIET-BANGLADESH RELATIONS AND THE RECENT VISIT BY THE SPECIAL ENVOY, WHO WAS IN MOSCOW SEPTEMBER 16-19. DURING HIS VISIT, MR. AHMED
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MET WITH SUPREME SOVIET DEPUTY CHAIRMAN KLYCHEV

AND WITH DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER FIRYUBIN (PRAVDA
SEPTEMBER 20).

3. HUK, WHO WNET WITH AHMED ON THESE CALLS, SAID THAT THEIR MAIN PURPOSE WAS TO DISCUSS "MATTERS OF MUTUAL INTEREST." HUK SAID THAT THESE INCLUDED INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS GENERALLY (THE MIDDLE EAST, UN MATTERS) REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS (INDIAN OCEAN AND SOUTH ASIA), AND BILATERAL AFFAIRS (SOVIET AID TO BANGLADESH). ON THE LATTER POINT, HUK SAID THAT NEW SOVIET AID HAD NOT BEEN DISCUSSED, AND THAT THE REPAYMENT OF THE 1973 GRAIN LOAN HAD LIKEWISE NOT COME UP. THE TALKS CONCERNED SOVIET PROJECTS ALREADY UNDERWAY OR PLANNED. HUK LINKED THE TOPICS TO THOSE DISCUSSED BY A BANGLADESH BANKERS DELEGATION WHICH LEFT MOSCOW ON AUGUST 14, JUST BEFORE THE COUP.

3. CONCERNING SOVIET ATTITUDES TOWARD THE COUP, HUK FELT THAT THE SOVIETS HAD RESERVED JUDGMENT IN THEIR PUBLIC TREATMENT, BUT WERE NOW COMING AROUND TO ACCEPT THE NEW REGIME. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE PRESS HAD IMPLICITLY CRITICIZED THE COUP ITSELF AND THE KILLING OF MUJIB, BUT HAD ALSO REPLAYED WITHOUT CRITICAL COMMENT THE VIEWS OF THE NEW LEADERS ON THE CAUSES AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CHANGE. THE SOVIETS HAVE NOT IMPLIED ANY CRITICISM OF PRESIDENT MUSHTQQUE, HUK POINTED OUT. THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR WOULD SOON BE RETURNING TO DACCA, SAID HUK, AND A NEW BANGLADESH AMBASSADOR SHOULD BE COMING TO MOSCOW IN THE NOT-TOO-DISTANT FUTURE. THE POST HAD BEEN VACANT FOR OVER TWO MONTHS, HE SAID, BUT HE THOUGHT THAT THE MAN NOMINATED BEFORE THE COUP WOULD PROBABLY BE APPROVED.

4. ASKED ABOUT ALLEGATIONS OF OUTSIDE INVOLVEMENT IN THE COUP, ESPECIALLY THOSE IN THE INDIAN LEFTIST PRESS, HUK SAID HE THOUGHT THEY WERE "BASED ON FANTASY." HIS IMPRESSION WAS THAT THE COUP ARRANGEMENTS HAD BEEN VERY PRIVATE AND TIGHTLY CONTROLLED WITHIN THE CIRCLE OF PARTICIPANTS. THE SOVIETS AND THE INDIANS WERE, NOT SURPRISINGLY, SUSPICIOUS ABOUT THE EARLY RECOGNITION CONFIDENTIAL

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BY PAKISTAN AND CHINA. BUT BANGLADESH CAN HARDLY BE BLAMED FOR DECISION BY THOSE GOVERNMENTS, SAID HUK. IN BOTH CASES THE PROCESS OF NORMALIZING RELATIONS HAD BEEN GOING ON FOR MANY MONTHS UNDER THE PREVIOUS REGIME. THE CHANGE IN DACCA, IN HUK'S VIEW, PROVIDED AN OPPORTUNITY FOR BOTH COUNTRIES TO CORRECT THEIR EARLIER MISTAKES AND TO EARN SOME GOOD WILL WITH THE NEW GOVERNMENT. HUK STRESSED THAT IN BOTH CASES

THE DECISION WAS NOT DACCA'S AND THAT THESE NORMALIZATIONS DID NOT SIGNIFY ANY SHIFT IN BANGLADESH FOREIGN POLICY. WITH PAKISTAN, FOR EXAMPLE, THE QUESTIONS OF DIVIDING THE ASSETS FROM 1971 AND REPATRIATING THE 100,000 OR SO "BIHARIS" REMAINED UNRESOLVED, ALTHOUGH THE BENGALIESE HOPED THAT PAKISTAN'S EARLY RECOGNITION WOULD SIGNIFY A NEW WILLINGNESS TO RESOLVE THESE ISSUES. BANGLADESH WILL, AS BEFORE, SEEK GOOD RELATIONS WITH ALL COUNTRIES WHICH ARE WILLING TO RECIPROCATE, SAID HUK. IN THE SIX WEEKS SINCE THE COUP, SOVIET AND INDIAN SUSPICIONS SEEM TO HAVE EASED OFF, HUK REITERATED.

5. ACCORDING TO HUK, SPECIAL ENVOY AHMED WAS ORGINALLY SCHEDULED TO COME TO MOSCOW ANYWAY FOR THE AFRO-ASIAN SOLIDARITY MEETING. HE IS AN OFFICAL OF THE RULING PARTY, AND A MEMBER OF THE ADVISORY COUNCIL, BUT HOLDS NO GOVERNMENT PORTFOLIO, SAID HUK. HE HAD ONCE ACTED AS A SPECIAL ENVOY TO EASTERN EUROPE UNDER THE OLD REGIME.

6. COMMENT: AHMED'S MAIN PURPOSE, WE GATHER, WAS TO REASSURE THE SOVIETS ABOUT DACCA'S CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO NON-ALIGNMENT AND TO ALLAY MOSCOW'S CONCERN ABOUT CHINESE AND PAKISTANI MOVES. BY TAKING ADVANTAGE OF A VISIT WHICH WAS ALREADY SCHEDULED, AND DEISGNATING AHMED A "SPECIAL ENVOY," DACCA WAS ABLE TO GET AROUND THE ABSENCE OF ITS AMBASSADOR, BUT STILL INSURE THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD PAY PROPER ATTENTION TO THE MAN AND HIS MESSAGE. MATLOCK

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, GOVERNMENT OVERTHROW, PRESIDENTIAL MISSIONS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 SEP 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975MOSCOW13813
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750335-0655
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750910/aaaaaiou.tel
Line Count: 145
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <11 JUN 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <24 OCT 2003 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOVIET-BANGLADESH RELATIONS: SPECIAL ENVOY VISITS MOSCOW
TAGS: PFOR, BG, UR, (AHMED, M)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006